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ABSTRACT

This document presents a summary of a national telephone survey that examined messages sent to adolescent girls (ages 10 to 17) across 6 types of media most heavily used by adolescent gi ls: television, movies, magazines, music videos, television commercials, and magazine advertisements. The study asked what messages are sent about gender roles--primarily about the importance of appearance, relationships, and careers. The summary presents findings and highlights of the study as well as "toplines" (the full survey instrument with data tabulated for each item in the survey). Results indicated: (1) kids believe television provides positive role models and messages about gender; (2) kids, however, were also very aware of ways where television reflects and may reinforce some gender stereotypes; (3) girls want to look like the characters they see on television; (4) more girls than boys, in particular, think the kids on television are like them and their friends; and (5) girls turn often to many types of media. (Contains 15 notes.) (SR)

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ED 444 215

Reflections of Girls in the Media

A National Survey of Children

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M. James

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Conducted by Lake Sosin Snell & Associates
for Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation

April 1997

CS 510 409

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Survey Methodology

The findings reported on here are based on a nationwide survey of 1,200 children ages 10 to 17 designed jointly by Children Now, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Lake Sosin Snell & Associates, and was conducted by Lake Sosin Snell & Associates. The interviews consisted of a base sample of 400 girls and 400 boys ages 10 to 17, with oversamples of African American and Hispanic boys and girls (100 of each). These oversamples were weighted into the base sample so that each of these demographic groups reflects their actual contribution to the total population of children. The sample size with these weights applied is 800 cases. The poll, which was conducted between April 1 and April 7, 1997, has a margin of error of +/- 3.5 percent. The numbers presented in the toplines represent percentages. Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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Children Now is a nonpartisan, independent voice for America's children, paying particular attention to the needs of children who are poor or at risk. Children Now uses innovative research and communications strategies to pioneer solutions to the problems facing children.

The Kaiser Family Foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, is a non-profit independent national health care philanthropy and is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

CHILDREN NOW

THE HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION

A NATIONAL SURVEY OF CHILDREN: Reflections of Girls in the Media

A Summary of Findings and Toplines

Conducted by Lake Sosin Snell and Associates
for Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation
April 1997

SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS
National Survey of Kids on Television and Gender Roles

A survey of 10-17 year olds found that young people today are getting conflicting messages when it comes to how women are portrayed both personally and professionally in television shows. They see women frequently portrayed as good role models -- acting with confidence, independence and intelligence. However, kids are also very aware of the messages girls receive about appearance as well as of the ways television relies on gender stereotypes. The national telephone survey, conducted by Lake, Sosin, Snell and Associates during the first week of April 1997 for Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation, explored girls' and boys' perceptions about gender roles in television shows. Key findings from the survey are discussed below.

Kids believe television provides positive role models and messages about gender:

- Fifty-two percent of girls and 53% of boys say there are enough good role models for girls today in television, although more girls (44%) than boys (36%) say there are too few. Older girls ages 16-17 are less likely (46%) than younger girls ages 10-12 (56%) to think there are enough good role models for girls.

- Majorities of 10-17 year olds also say there are enough good role models for boys in television (56% of girls and 64% of boys).

- Girls and boys think television shows the importance of having a career or job for both women (67% and 68% respectively) and men (73% and 72% respectively).

- Kids also think television shows boys and girls as equals (57% of girls and 61% of boys agree) and shows adult men and women as equals (59% of girls and 61% of boys agree), although over one-third of boys and girls disagree.

- Majorities of both girls and boys say qualities such as confidence, problem solving, intelligence, as well as wanting to be in a relationship, are equally likely to be displayed by male as female television characters (see series of questions 39-58 in toplines that follow).

Kids, however, are also very aware of ways where television reflects and may reinforce some gender stereotypes:

- Both girls (61%) and boys (53%) say the female characters they see on television are thinner than women in real life, but that male characters on television are about the same weight as the men in real life (61% of girls and 58% of boys). Older girls (71% of girls ages 16-17) are more likely to think women television characters are thinner than women they know in real life than do younger girls (51% of girls ages 10-12).

- Kids notice an emphasis on attractiveness, especially for women and girls, in television shows: 57 percent of girls and 59 percent of boys say the female characters in the

television shows they watch are "better looking" than the women and girls they know in real life.

- Worrying about appearance or weight, crying or whining, weakness, and flirting are all qualities both girls and boys say they associate more with a female character on television than a male character. Playing sports, being a leader, and wanting to be kissed or have sex, on the other hand, are thought of as characteristics displayed more often by male characters (see series of questions 39-58 in toplines that follow).

- Both girls (62%) and boys (58%) say the female characters they see on television usually rely on someone else to solve their problems, whereas male characters tend to solve their own problems (53% of girls and 50% of boys agree).

Girls want to look like the characters they see on television:

- Seven out of ten (69%) of girls -- and 40 percent of boys -- say they have *wanted* to look like, dress, or fix their hair like a character(s) on television. Furthermore, almost a third of girls (31%) and 22% of boys say they *changed* something about their appearance to be more like a television character. Only 16% of girls and 12% of boys say they have ever dieted or exercised to look like a television character.

More girls than boys, in particular, think the kids on television are like them and their friends:

- Six out of ten (59%) of girls and 46% of boys believe the *girls* they see on television are like them and their friends, while 52% of girls and 49% of boys believe that the *boys* they see on television are like them and their friends.

- Among girls and boys who think television characters that are about their age are not like themselves, the majority say it is because they behave differently (51%).

Girls turn often to many types of media:

- Girls between 10 and 17 spend most of their time listening to CD's and tapes (50% very often), listening to the radio (46% very often), and watching television programs (32% very often).

- In a middle tier, girls are watching movies on the VCR (24% very often), reading fashion magazines (24% very often), going to the movies (15% very often), reading magazines other than fashion magazines (12% very often), and playing video or computer games (11% very often).

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CHILDREN NOW/KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION
NATIONAL SURVEY OF CHILDREN AGES 10 TO 17,
ABOUT THE IMAGE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE MEDIA

April 1997

INTRODUCTION: Hello. My name is _____. I'm calling for National Opinion Surveys. We are conducting a nationwide survey among children and young adults from 10 to 17 concerning issues which involve children and the media. We are not selling anything, and I will not ask you for a contribution or donation.

Could I please speak with the youngest (boy/girl) aged 10 to 17 in your household?

To Parent: We are conducting a poll for a national children's organization. We will be asking the opinion of nearly 1200 children nationwide. The responses are confidential. We would like to ask your child to answer a few questions about the image of women and girls in the media. You are more than welcome to listen in to the poll as we go through it with your child if that will make you more comfortable.

Gender of respondent

Male.....50
Female.....50

1. How old are you?

Younger than 10	**TERMINATE**
10	9
11	10
12	15
13	13
14	12
15	15
16	14
17	11
Over 17	**TERMINATE**
Refused/don't know	**TERMINATE**

I am going to list a few types of media, like television and movies. For each one please tell me if you use that media very often, often, every now and then, or never.

(ROTATE Q2-Q9)

		Very Often		Very Often	Often	Now and Then	Never	(don't know)
		Boys	Girls					
2.	Watch television program	39	32	36	44	18	2	0
3.	Listen to the radio	35	46	41	39	17	4	0
4.	Play video or computer games	27	11	19	26	33	23	0
5.	Read a newspaper	6	6	6	19	39	36	0
6.	Listen to music on Cd's or tapes	43	50	47	38	13	2	0
7.	Go to the movies	10	15	13	34	45	8	0
8.	Watch movies on the VCR	23	24	23	40	33	4	0
9.	Use the Internet	11	6	8	12	21	58	1
ASK LAST (DO NO ROTATE):								
10.	Read fashion magazines like Seventeen	3	24	14	19	15	51	1
11.	Read other magazines	13	12	13	35	30	23	0

12. Name the three characters or people you see on television you admire or like the most? [Follow-up, if needed: Who are your three favorite television characters?]

Top ten mentions:	Boys		Girls	
	Michael Jordan	12	Will Smith	9
	Tim Allen	10	Martin Lawrence	7
	Bart Simpson	9	Jonathon Taylor Thomas	6
	Martin Lawrence	9	Tim Allen (Tim Taylor)	6
	Will Smith	8	Tom Cruise	5
	Jerry Seinfeld	7	Brandy	4
	Jim Carrey	6	Jerry Seinfeld	4
	Homer Simpson	5	Jim Carrey	4
	Jean Claude Van Damn	5	Oprah Winfrey	4
	Arnold Schwarzenegger	4	Rosie O'Donnell	4

13. [FOLLOW-UP ON FIRST CHARACTER OR PERSON THEY MENTION IN Q12]
Can you list three words or phrases to describe that character or person?

(WRITE IN VERBATIM RESPONSE, ACCEPT UP TO THREE MENTIONS)

Top ten mentions:	Boys		Girls	
	Funny	51%	Funny	46%
	Cool/neat/hot/bad	13%	Smart/intelligent	19%
	Smart/intelligent	11%	Cute/handsome	17%
	Athletic/athlete	7%	Nice/friendly	13%
	Good actor/actress	6%	Good actor/actress	9%
	Strong	6%	Cool/neat/hot/bad	9%
	(Dk/na/refused)	6%	(Dk/na/refused)	7%
	Crazy/wild	5%	Their looks/they're pretty	7%
	Nice/friendly	5%	Skillful/talented	6%
	Skillful/talented	5%	Beautiful	4%

[ROTATE Q.14 AND Q.15 BASED ON SEX OF CHILD: IF GIRL DO Q.14 FIRST, FOLLOWED BY Q.15; IF BOY DO Q.15 FIRST, FOLLOWED BY Q.14]

14. Do you think there are enough good role models for girls in television programs?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Yes	52	53	52
No	40	36	44
(don't know)	8	11	5

15. Do you think there are enough good role models for boys in television programs?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Yes	60	64	56
No	33	30	37
(don't know)	6	5	7

16. Do you think girls your age are influenced in a good way, influenced in a bad way, or not influenced at all by the characters they see on television?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Influenced in a good way	35	36	35
Influenced in a bad way	19	19	20
Not influenced at all	22	22	22
(both)	15	14	17
(don't know)	8	9	6

17. Do you think boys your age are influenced in a good way, influenced in a bad way, or not influenced at all by the characters they see on television?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Influenced in a good way	28	32	23
Influenced in a bad way	28	25	31
Not influenced at all	24	24	23
(both)	15	15	15
(don't know)	5	3	8

18. Are the girls you see on television who are your age like you or your friends?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Yes	52	46	59
No	43	49	38
(don't know)	4	5	4

19. Are the boys you see on television who are your age like you or your friends?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Yes	50	49	52
No	46	48	44
(don't know)	4	3	4

[IF NO IN Q18 OR Q19]

20. In what way are the girls or boys you see on television different? (Follow-up if needed: Why are they different? How are they different?)

_____

_____

WRITE IN RESPONSE VERBATIM, CODE AFTER INTERVIEW COMPLETE

	Total	Boys	Girls
They look different	15	15	14
They behave differently	51	51	53
They dress differently	10	13	7
They care about different things	10	7	12
They are a different color than me	1	1	1
They are younger/older than me	3	4	3
They don't have real problems like me	12	11	12
They have more money than me	10	11	10
They have less money than me	1	1	*
They are more popular	4	5	3
Other	10	9	10
Nothing/none	5	6	5

Now let me read some questions about the entertainment television shows you watch. Please answer yes or no for each of the questions.

(ROTATE Q21-Q24)

	Yes	No	(don't know)
21. Does television show the importance of women having a career or a job?			
Total	**68**	**28**	**4**
Boys	68	27	4
Girls	67	28	4
22. Does television show the importance of men having a career or a job?			
Total	**72**	**24**	**4**
Boys	72	25	3
Girls	73	23	4

		Yes	No	(don't know)
23	Are boys and girls shown as equals?			
	Total	**59**	**37**	**4**
	Boys	61	35	4
	Girls	57	39	4
24	Are adult men and adult women shown as equals?			
	Total	**60**	**37**	**2**
	Boys	61	36	2
	Girls	59	38	3

25 Do you think there are enough entertainment television shows with girls and women as main characters?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Yes	69	69	70
No	28	28	29
(don't know)	2	3	1

26 Do you think there are enough entertainment television shows with boys and men as main characters?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Yes	91	91	91
No	8	8	8
(don't know)	1	1	1

27 In general, do you think the women you see on entertainment television are more good looking, are less good looking, or are just as good looking as the women you know in real life?

	Total	Boys	Girls
More good looking	58	59	57
Less good looking	5	6	5
Just as good looking	33	31	35
(don't know)	3	4	3

28 In general, do you think the men you see on entertainment television are more good looking, are less good looking, or are just as good looking as the men you know in real life?

	Total	Boys	Girls
More good looking	46	34	59
Less good looking	7	8	6
Just as good looking	37	42	33
(don't know)	10	17	3

29. In general, do you think the women you see on entertainment television are thinner, are heavier, or are the same weight as the women you know in real life?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Thinner	57	53	61
Heavier	3	4	2
Same weight	38	40	36
(don't know)	2	3	1

30. In general, do you think the men you see on entertainment television are thinner, are heavier, or are the same weight as the men you know in real life?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Thinner	28	26	29
Heavier	10	11	9
Same weight	59	58	61
(don't know)	3	4	2

31. **[GIRLS ONLY]** In general, do you think the boys you see on entertainment television are thinner, are heavier, or are the same weight as your friends who are boys?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Thinner	18	n/a	18
Heavier	8	n/a	8
Same weight	74	n/a	74
(don't know)	1	n/a	1

32. **[BOYS ONLY]** In general, do you think the boys you see on entertainment television are thinner, are heavier, or are the same weight as you or your friends?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Thinner	19	19	n/a
Heavier	10	10	n/a
Same weight	68	68	n/a
(don't know)	2	2	n/a

33. **[GIRLS ONLY]** In general, do you think the girls you see on entertainment television are thinner, are heavier, or are the same weight as you or your friends?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Thinner	42	n/a	42
Heavier	3	n/a	3
Same weight	55	n/a	55
(don't know)	0	n/a	0

34. **[BOYS ONLY]** In general, do you think the girls you see on entertainment television are thinner, are heavier, or are the same weight as your friends who are girls?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Thinner	37	37	n/a
Heavier	7	7	n/a
Same weight	55	55	n/a
(don't know)	1	1	n/a

35. Thinking about the adult women and girls you see on entertainment television, do they usually solve their own problems or do they rely on someone else to help them solve their problems?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Solve own	34	36	33
Rely on someone else	60	58	62
(don't know)	6	6	5

36. Thinking about the adult men and boys you see on entertainment television, do they usually solve their own problems or do they rely on someone else to help them solve their problems?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Solve own	52	50	53
Rely on someone else	44	46	42
(don't know)	4	4	5

37. Thinking about the adult women and girls you see on entertainment television, would you say they are usually intelligent or smart, about average, or usually not intelligent or smart?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Intelligent or smart	37	40	34
About average	54	50	57
Not intelligent or smart	8	8	9
(don't know)	1	2	1

38. Thinking about the adult men and boys you see on entertainment television, would you say they are usually intelligent or smart, about average, or usually not intelligent or smart?

	Total	Boys	Girls
Intelligent or smart	27	29	25
About average	60	56	65
Not intelligent or smart	12	14	10
(don't know)	1	1	1

Now I'm going to read you a list of characteristics. Thinking about the people you see in entertainment television shows you watch, do you associate this characteristic more with men and boy characters you see on television, more with the women and girl characters you see on television, with both, or with neither?

		More with Men	More with Women	Both	Neither	(don't know)
(ROTATE Q39-Q58)						
39.	Being intelligent or smart. Do you associate being intelligent or smart more with the men and boy characters you watch on entertainment television shows, more with the women and girl characters on television, with both, or with neither?					
	Total	**12**	**25**	**57**	**5**	**1**
	Boys	14	24	56	5	0
	Girls	9	26	58	5	2
40.	Flirting. Do you associate flirting more with the men and boy characters you watch on entertainment television shows, more with the women and girl characters on television, with both, or with neither?					
	Total	**22**	**35**	**37**	**4**	**2**
	Boys	21	38	35	4	2
	Girls	23	32	38	5	2
41.	Having a job					
	Total	**30**	**10**	**55**	**4**	**2**
	Boys	33	10	51	5	1
	Girls	26	10	59	3	2
42.	Doing well in school					
	Total	**5**	**40**	**50**	**4**	**2**
	Boys	6	38	50	5	1
	Girls	4	41	49	3	3
43.	Playing sports					
	Total	**63**	**3**	**31**	**3**	**1**
	Boys	66	2	29	3	1
	Girls	60	4	33	3	1
44.	Talking about the opposite sex. Now remember we are thinking about the characters you see on television					
	Total	**25**	**21**	**45**	**6**	**3**
	Boys	25	22	44	6	3
	Girls	25	21	46	6	3

		More with Men	Women	Both	Neither	(don't know)
45.	Wanting to kiss or have sex					
	Total	**41**	**12**	**36**	**6**	**4**
	Boys	39	13	37	6	4
	Girls	44	10	36	6	4
46.	Crying or whining					
	Total	**5**	**70**	**16**	7	**2**
	Boys	4	68	17	9	2
	Girls	6	73	15	5	2
47.	Talking or worrying about how they look					
	Total	**4**	**73**	**18**	**4**	**1**
	Boys	4	71	19	5	1
	Girls	4	75	17	2	1
48.	Wanting to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. Do you associate wanting to have a boyfriend or girlfriend more with the men and boy characters you watch on entertainment television shows, more with the women and girl characters on television, with both, or with neither?					
	Total	**14**	**26**	**52**	**5**	**2**
	Boys	17	24	50	6	2
	Girls	12	27	54	5	2
49.	Being weak or wimpy					
	Total	**18**	**38**	**25**	**17**	**2**
	Boys	19	39	24	17	1
	Girls	17	36	27	17	3
50.	Being good looking					
	Total	**16**	**34**	**45**	**3**	**2**
	Boys	8	49	38	4	1
	Girls	23	19	53	2	3
51.	Being a leader					
	Total	**41**	**13**	**41**	**4**	**2**
	Boys	48	9	37	4	2
	Girls	34	16	45	4	1
52.	Worrying about their weight. Now remember we are thinking about the characters you see on television					
	Total	**4**	**73**	**16**	**6**	**1**
	Boys	6	70	17	6	1
	Girls	2	75	15	7	1

		More with Men	Women	Both	Neither	(don't know)
53.	Solving problems					
	Total	**16**	**26**	**52**	**4**	**1**
	Boys	20	23	50	5	2
	Girls	13	30	54	2	1
54.	Being confident or sure					
	Total	**22**	**20**	**52**	**4**	**2**
	Boys	22	20	50	5	2
	Girls	22	19	54	3	1
55.	Pleasing others					
	Total	**8**	**40**	**44**	**5**	**3**
	Boys	9	41	42	5	3
	Girls	8	39	46	5	2
56.	Being someone you admire. Do you associate being someone you admire more with the men and boy characters you watch on entertainment television shows, more with the women and girl characters on television, with both, or with neither?					
	Total	**22**	**26**	**43**	**9**	**1**
	Boys	33	14	40	12	0
	Girls	11	38	45	5	1
57.	Doing something you would like to do					
	Total	**28**	**21**	**42**	**8**	**1**
	Boys	46	7	37	9	1
	Girls	10	35	47	7	1
58.	Being outgoing or adventuresome					
	Total	**36**	**14**	**46**	**3**	**0**
	Boys	43	12	41	4	0
	Girls	29	17	52	3	0

Now let me read you some different areas and please answer yes or no for each question.

		Yes	No	(don't know)
(ROTATE Q59-Q61)				
59.	Have you ever wanted to look like, dress, or fix your hair like the characters you see on television shows			
	Total	**55**	**45**	**0**
	Boys	40	60	0
	Girls	69	30	1

		Yes	No	(don't know)
60.	Did you ever change the way you look -- whether it was changing your hair, wearing different clothes, or whatever -- to look like a character you see on television shows			
	Total	**26**	**74**	**0**
	Boys	22	78	0
	Girls	31	69	1
61.	Have you ever dieted or exercised to look like a character you see on television shows			
	Total	**14**	**85**	**1**
	Boys	12	88	0
	Girls	16	83	1

Thank you. The few remaining questions are for classification purposes only.

62. What grade are you in? _____ (WRITE IN RESPONSE)

3rd	1
4th	5
5th	11
6th	12
7th	13
8th	14
9th	14
10th	14
11th	11
12th	5
Don't know	0

63. Do you currently live with both your parents, just your mother, just your father, with one parent and one step parent, or with someone else?

Both parents	63
Mother	20
Father	5
Parent and step parent	8
Someone else	4
(don't know)	0

64. What does your father do for a living? **(IF NECESSARY)** What exactly does that work involve? **(WRITE IN) (RECORD IN PROPER CATEGORY UPON COMPLETION OF INTERVIEW)**

_____

Professional	14
WC Managerial	8
WC Clerical	2
Service employee	6
Government employee	5
Farmer	1
Unskilled BC	6
Skilled BC	22
Other	12
(Don't know)	17
(Refused)	6

65. Does your mother work outside of the home?

Yes **(GO TO Q66)**	68
No **(GO TO Q67)**	29
(don't know) **(GO TO Q66)**	3

(IF YES IN Q65)

66. What does your mother do for a living? **(IF NECESSARY)** What exactly does that work involve? **(WRITE IN) (RECORD IN PROPER CATEGORY UPON COMPLETION OF INTERVIEW)**

_____

Professional	26
WC Managerial	6
WC Clerical	18
Service employee	20
Government employee	5
Farmer	0
Unskilled BC	4
Skilled BC	5
Other	7
(Don't know)	6
(Refused)	3

67. With which ethnic group do you identify yourself: White, Black or African American, Latino or Hispanic, or some other ethnic or racial background?

White	74
Black	12
Hispanic	11
Asian	3
Other	0
(don't know)	0

That completes our public opinion survey. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation, and have a pleasant (day/evening).

NOTE: All numbers presented here are represented as percentages. Numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.